VISITATIONS

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE of PENNSYLVANIA

THE RT. REV. LYMAN C. OGILBY
BISHOP

January 1985

TO: The Clergy of the Diocese

FROM: The Rt. Rev. Lyman C. Ogilby

SUBJ: The Bishop's Visitation

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1. The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is an integral part of the Bishop's Visitation. "It is the Bishop's prerogative, when present, to be the principal celebrant at the Lord's Table, and to preach the Gospel." (The Book of Common Prayer, pp 322, 354)

2. If the Visitation occurs at the principal service on a Sunday or other feast, the Collect and Lessons are properly those of the Day. At the discretion of the Bishop, however, the Collect for Baptism or Confirmation (page 203 or 254) and one or more of the Lessons provided for use at Baptism or Confirmation (page 928-9) may be substituted for the Proper of the Day.

3. When Holy Baptism is celebrated as part of the Bishop's Visitation, the Bishop presides in accordance with the directions on page 298. After the bishop has blessed the water (and Chrism if desired), the priest or deacon performs the actual baptism. The Bishop then says the prayer on page 308 and lays his hand upon the heads of the newly baptized and marks them with the sign of the cross. In the case of adults and older children who speak for themselves this act represents their "confirmation", namely, the laying on of hands by a bishop in response to their public affirmation of faith (see second paragraph, page 412). THEY ARE NOT, THEREFORE, TO BE PRESENTED AGAIN WITH THE CANDIDATES FOR CONFIRMATION.

4. If there are no baptisms, the Bishop will consecrate oil of Chrism for use at Baptism (if you desire to use oil at Baptism) immediately after the postcommunion prayer at the Eucharist using the *Form for Consecration of Chrism apart from Baptism* on page 209 of The Book of Occasional Services.

5. In the rite of Confirmation, three distinct categories of persons may be presented to the Bishop:

   For Confirmation
   Persons to be presented include those described in the following rubrics from The Book of Common Prayer:

a. "In the course of their Christian development, those baptized at an early age are expected, when they are ready and have been duly prepared, to make a mature public affirmation of their faith and commitment to the responsibilities of their Baptism and to receive the laying on of hands by the Bishop."

b. "Those baptized as adults, unless baptized with the laying on of hands by a bishop, are also expected to make a public affirmation of their faith and commitment to their responsibilities of their Baptism in the presence of a bishop and to receive the laying on of hands." Baptized persons from other churches in which the laying on of hands by a bishop is not practiced are also presented for confirmation.

Note: Baptism of an adult or an older child with laying on of hands by a bishop means that the placing of the Bishop's hand on the baptized person's head, and marking the forehead with the sign of the Cross (using Chrism if desired) and saying the formula on page 308 "*N., you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever. Amen.*" is their confirmation.

For Reception

This category includes those who, seeking the Communion of this Church, come from traditions in which they have already received the laying on of hands by a bishop.

For Reaffirmation

This category is appropriate for members of our Communion who, having lapsed from the faith or having experienced some new and fresh impulse of the Spirit and call of the Lord, seek to reaffirm their renewed faith and conversion in the presence of a bishop.

6. Recognizing the fact that the three above mentioned categories may occasion questions of appropriate application in certain situations, you are asked in such cases to seek the advice and judgment of the Bishop.

Historically, the laying on of hands is a gesture of identification between the one laying on hands and the recipient and therefore, a sign of communion; it is also a gesture of blessing. Therefore, the Bishop will lay hands on persons in all three categories. In each case confusion of intention is avoided by the distinct and separate formulas which accompany the action.

7. The Diocesan Liturgical Committee is ready to assist you in planning the service or to share with you what others have already done in similar situations. Please call the Rev. Frank Griswold, (215) CH 7-7466.

8. It is your responsibility to take the initiative in arranging plans for the use of the Bishop's time when he is with you. Please telephone the Bishop's secretary to negotiate times for worship, for the vestry meeting, and for all other events. We also encourage congregations whose visits fall on the same Sunday to be in contact with each other with regard to schedules.

9. It is the duty of the Bishop in every visitation to examine the records required by Title III, Canon 21, Section 3. Please have these records on display for his attention.

10. The Bishop expects to meet with the vestry. Please plan for such a meeting, aiming for at least a 45 minute session.

11. Traditionally, the money offering at the service is given to the Bishop's Discretionary Fund, which he uses soley for charitable purposes. These welcome offerings may be sent to the Controller of the Diocese. Checks should be made payable to "The Bishop's Discretionary Fund."

GUIDELINES REGARDING THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION BY BAPTIZED CHILDREN PRIOR TO CONFIRMATION

1. The communion of baptized children needs to be considered in relation to the eucharistic life of the child's family. Parents together with the parish priest should decide the appropriate time for a child to take part in the eucharistic meal.

2. Children are able to preceive and to understand things intuitively, well before they are able to express things verbally. Also they learn by doing. Children's capacity for wonder and awe, their desire to share in the Eucharist, and their ability to participate and to be attentive, all need to be taken seriously as signs of their readiness.

3. Programs of instruction should center around the home and recognize the role of the parents in helping children develop their eucharistic awareness.

4. Patterns of communion need to be kept flexible and the sensibilities of the child must, above all, be respected. To oblige children to receive communion against their will is to do violence to the Sacrament. There are times when children, no less than adults, are not ready to share in the Eucharist.